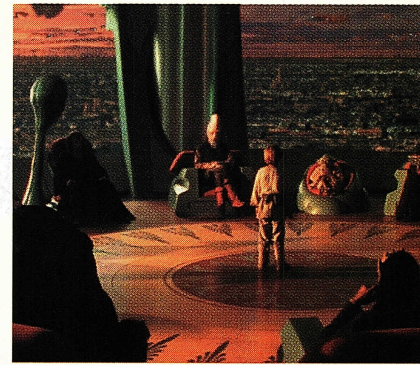


New Movies



The galaxy far, far away



STAR WARS: EPISODE I THE PHANTOM MENACE

BUY IT FOR...

- THE STUNNING SOUND MIX
- THE GEORGE LUCAS COMMENTARY
- LIGHT SABRE ACTION

DETAILS

RRP \$39.95
RATING PG
DIRECTOR GEORGE LUCAS
STARRING LIAM NEESON, EWAN MCGREGOR, NATALIE PORTMAN, JAKE LLOYD, BRIAN BLESSED, IAN MCDIARMID, RAY PARK
PICTURE ANAMORPHIC WIDESCREEN 1.85:1
SOUND THX, DOLBY DIGITAL 5.1, DOLBY DIGITAL 2.0

THE FILM

ALTHOUGH THE FOURTH TO BE RELEASED, *THE PHANTOM MENACE*

is the first in George Lucas' epic *Star Wars* saga. It was always his plan to create a sequence of six movies in a serial format, but the technical limitations of special effects in 1977 forced him to start at episode four. This move confused punters at the time, but now that *Star Wars* is firmly planted in the collective conscious this numbering method is widely recognised.

The Phantom Menace begins more than 30 years before the *Star Wars* trilogy we're familiar with, in the time of the Old Republic. For a thousand generations a stable democratic

government has ruled the galaxy, propped up by the unbeatable, incorruptible ranks of the Jedi Knights. But trouble is brewing on the tiny planet of Naboo, where the greedy Trade Federation is flexing its muscle.

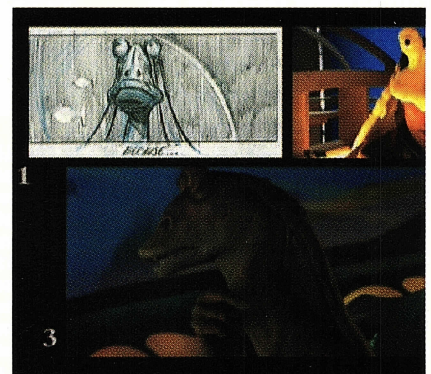
To put the Federation in its place, Chancellor Valorum (Terance Stamp) sends two Jedi to Naboo. When they arrive, Qui-Gon Jinn (Liam Neeson) and his apprentice Obi-Wan Kenobi (Ewan McGregor) find the Federation uncooperative, and escape with their lives to the planet surface. With the help of the bumbling Gungan Jar Jar Binks (Ahmed Best), they meet with the Gungan ruler Boss Nass (Brian Blessed) and, ultimately, the elected monarch of →

FEATURE FOCUS

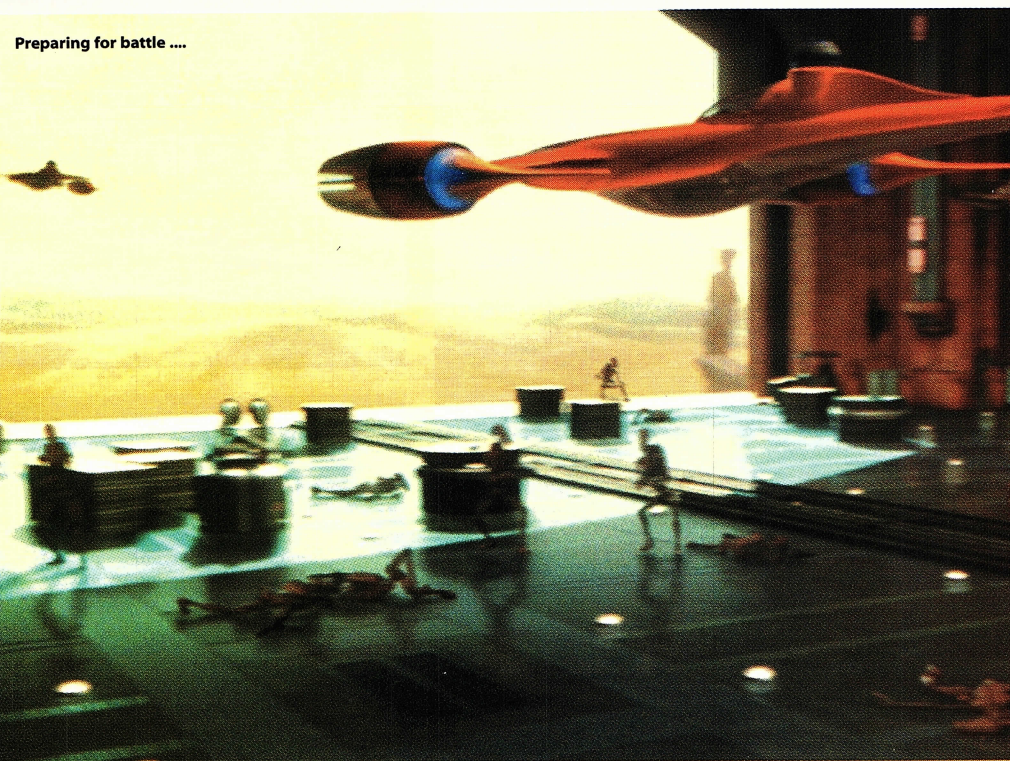
ANIMATICS

For the new *Star Wars* film, even the storyboards had to be in 3D

Filmmakers have used storyboards for decades to help plan a film's shooting and streamline the production process. But for *The Phantom Menace*, static visualisation of the film's final form wasn't enough. Hence, the modern technique of animatics was used, where rough composites were used in the planning process. Considering the cost involved in rendering time and the effort and labour involved, this was an essential part of bringing *The Phantom Menace* to the screen. The multi-angle function of DVD is used to demonstrate how animatics were used for two scenes: the first lap of the pod race and the submarine ride through the core of Naboo. In each case the standard option is to view the storyboards, animatics and finished product all onscreen at once, but each of the three can be viewed by themselves at the push of a button.



Preparing for battle



→ the human population, Queen Amidala (Natalie Portman).

Escaping the Federation blockade by the skin of their teeth, the heroes set down on planet Tatooine to hasten repairs to their ship. While shopping for parts they encounter the young Anakin Skywalker (Jake Lloyd), who ends up winning a Ben Hur style rocket sled race to pay for their repairs. As reward, Anakin is granted his freedom, and he hooks up with the Jedi in the hopes of joining their ranks, and ultimately ridding his home-world of slavery.

When Amidala eventually reaches the capital planet of Coruscant, she meets up with an exasperated Senator Palpatine (Ian McDiarmid). Corruption in

the senate is so rife that an open-and-shut matter like stopping an illegal invasion can be debated without end. Stopping just long enough to pass a 'no confidence' motion against the Chancellor, Amidala resolves to return to Naboo and face the music. Most of the main characters follow.

In a brilliant stroke of diplomacy, Amidala convinces the Gungans to launch a suicide mission against the droid armies of the Federation, allowing her and the Jedi to sneak into the palace. Once inside, they run into the Sith Lord Darth Maul (Ray Park), who in an epic laser sword battle defeats Qui-Gon before being cut in two by Obi-Wan. The Queen gets her planet

DID YOU KNOW?

■ In Watto's junkyard, there are some props left over from 2001: A Space Odyssey.

"THIS IS THE MOST EXTRAS-PACKED DVD SO FAR..."

back, the Gungans win, thanks to Jar-Jar's incompetence, and Anakin ends up blowing up a space cruiser with minimal assistance from R2D2 (Kenny Baker).

When the dust settles and the dead have been cremated, everything seems to be back to normal. Except for one little detail: Palpatine is now Chancellor. His voice and jawline bear a striking resemblance to that of Darth Sidious, the mysterious Sith leader who appeared throughout the film. Could it be that the threat of the Trade Federation was just an illusion and the real danger lies in the ascent of a man who would be... emperor? Only the next two sequels will tell.

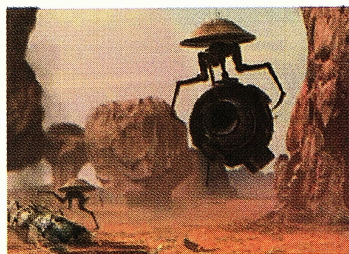
The Phantom Menace received a fair degree of criticism when it debuted

DELETED SCENES

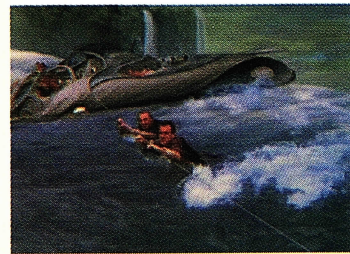
No less than seven deleted scenes were completely re-done for the DVD release. Many of them had not passed the animatics stage when they were cut and needed all the special effects to be built up from scratch. None of them are essential for telling the story but it's interesting to see how millions of dollars can be blown on a whim ...



■ **COMPLETE POD RACE GRID SEQUENCE**
Several minutes were cut from the film, and it's easy to see why. The script called for every single participant in the race to be introduced by the two-headed guy in the booth, and the sequence really dragged on. Some of the aliens shown looked way too fake, and the pack animal defecating wasn't called for. Most disturbing of all, you see the wife and kids of one of the racers waiting on the sidelines, making his death on the track rather too tragic.



■ **EXTENDED POD RACE LAP 2**
While there was nothing really wrong with this material, it was trimmed to make the overall length of the pod race shorter and more intense. It's a shame, since some unusual things came to light in the second lap. It's revealed that Sebulba has flame throwers on his racer. We also see the track cleared of wreckage by some hovering droids, only for Anakin to ram them. On the canyon dune turn, this role is played by Jawas, who in turn get sniped at by Tuskan Raiders.



■ **WATERFALL SEQUENCE**
After Qui-Gon, Obi-Wan and Jar-Jar travel through the middle of Naboo in their submarine, they arrive in the planetary capital of Theed. Just as they surface the power fails completely, making for a narrow escape from plummeting to the bottom of the giant waterfall. This whole sequence, including Jar-Jar's comical escape, was deemed to detract from the gravity of the planet being invaded, and was thus cut from the final version.



over two years ago. Many fans who had grown up with the *Star Wars* movies felt betrayed by the starkly different vision presented in the new film, feeling it cheapened their memories of the seminal works of their childhoods. Some are already mocking the title chosen for episode two *Attack of the Clones*.

George Lucas has taken all these concerns in his stride, confident in his vision for the franchise. He has a definite plan for the series, and whether or not you like it you can't help but admire the strength of his convictions. Not only that but by funding the movies himself, Lucas can maintain total creative control, breaking new ground in special effects with each release.

Star Wars is the ultimate evolution of a formula of space adventures that

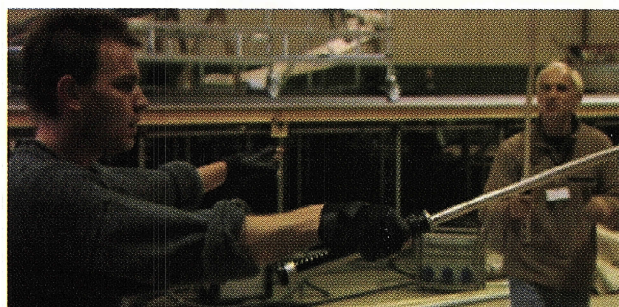
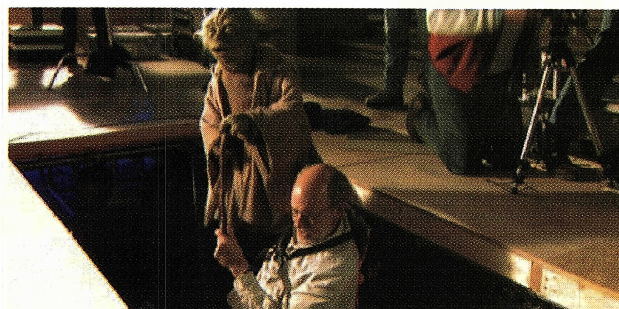
dates back to the days of *Flash Gordon*. It's about simple tales of good and evil, right and wrong, where the good guys win and the bad guys fall screaming into reactors. It's basically aimed at children, but any discerning adult can find something to like in a work as saturated in detail as *The Phantom Menace*. Girls usually fall for Amidala's costumes, and the guys can't deny that this movie has the best lightsaber fights ever committed to film.

Most important of all, this is the most extras-packed DVD release so far. There is something like seven hours of extra material, shedding light on every facet of the film making process. Any *Star Wars* fan worth their salt owes it to themselves to check out this release. One can't help but be amazed at the

↑ FEATURE FOCUS

"THE BEGINNING": MAKING EPISODE ONE

This hour long piece consists entirely of exclusive, never-before-seen footage of the creation of *The Phantom Menace*, from when Lucas sat down to write the script in '94 all the way through to the reception it received on opening night. While fairly slow-moving, the documentary is none the less engrossing. You get to see how all the sets in Tunisia were destroyed overnight in a storm, and how the part of Jar-Jar was originally played by a guy in a rubber suit. Originally they were going to just replace his head, but they soon realised to would be cheaper to replace his entire body in the final version. For fans of the film and the series, this is a great opportunity to see how the project evolved.



■ AIR TAXI SEQUENCE

This is only a few seconds long, and depicts a ride in an air taxi shortly after the heroes arrive on Coruscant. It provides views of the vast cityscape from several angles, highlighting the multi-layered flow of air traffic, and the exotic yet sterile architecture of the capital of the Galactic Republic. In retrospect, its removal from the theatrical release was considered by Lucas to be a mistake, and so it has been re-inserted in the feature for the DVD edition.



■ DAWN BEFORE THE RACE

This depicts a number of fairly mundane developments on the morning before the excitement of the race and really wasn't needed in the final version at all. Anakin's best friend shows up to tow the racer into position ready for the following day. Meanwhile, the trusty C3PO and R2D2 busy themselves by polishing the cockpit. And that's about it. Despite the ever welcome presence of the lovely Natalie Portman, the scene is fairly forgettable.



■ ANAKIN'S SCUFFLE WITH GREEDO

This scene had two purposes: firstly, to show a bit of Anakin's lurking dark side in the form of his short temper and, secondly, to confirm that the little green alien he was hanging out with earlier was indeed Greedo, the bounty hunter who gets shot by Han Solo in a seedy space bar in Episode IV. After Qui-Gon breaks up the scuffle, one of Greedo's relatives comments that he'll come to a bad end some day. Oh, how right they are ..



■ FAREWELL TO JIRA

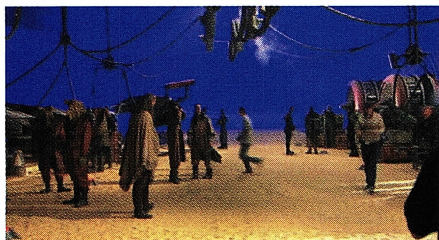
After saying goodbye to his mother, Anakin and Qui-Gon bid their farewells to the old woman running the stall. At the outskirts of town, one of Darth Maul's probe droids sneaks up on them, but Qui-Gon cuts it down in short order. This scene was cut not only because it provided needless exposition in a movie already chocking in it, but it detracted from the emotional impact of Skywalker's separation anxiety. So out it went.

FEATURETTES

These short documentaries each last for only about five or ten minutes, but this is long enough to reveal the incredible degree of detail packed into the film.

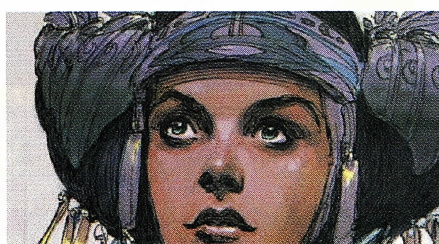
■ VISUAL EFFECTS

This examines how the latest techniques in computer graphics were used to create the impossible sets and armies of artificial characters, including everybody's favourite, Gungan.



■ COSTUMES

Reveals how Lucasfilm scoured the globe to find exotic, sophisticated costumes befitting the Old Republic. In particular the resplendent Queen Amidala and her cavernous wardrobe.



■ DESIGN

From art deco Americana to 50s hood ornaments, George Lucas' elite team of designers left no stone unturned when looking for inspiration to completely redesign the *Star Wars* universe.



■ FIGHTS

Behind-the-scenes on the intensive training program in the school of Jedi combat. Yes, they really did make light sabre noises while practicing. But, no, you don't get to see them do it.



■ STORY

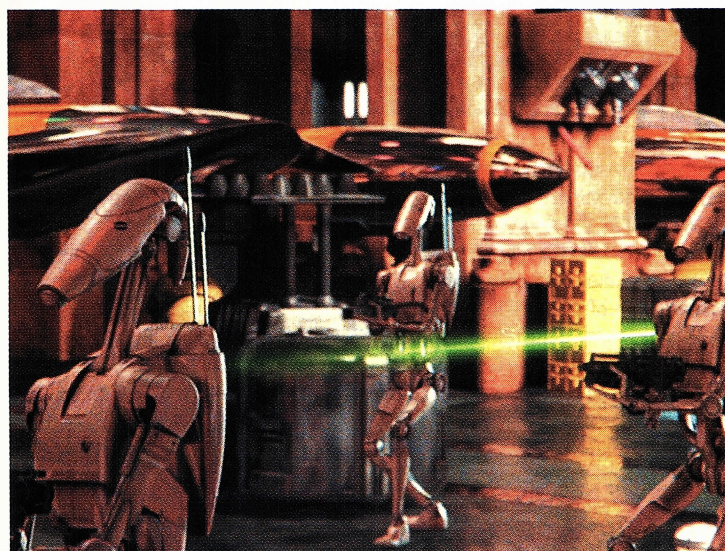
The beardy genius that is George Lucas talks all too briefly about where *The Phantom Menace* fits in to his six film saga, and even gives a couple of hints on what to expect in Episode II.



"THIS DVD SETS A NEW WATERMARK FOR THE MEDIUM"



And not a can of VB in sight ...



→ grandeur of the production, or the quality of the transfer. This DVD sets a new high watermark for the medium.

THE DISC

■ **PICTURE:** This is a first class production, with the archive-grade clarity you'd expect from a cultural event at significant as *Star Wars*. Every single frame explodes with detail, and you now have the chance to go through frame by frame and pick out all the little hidden bits of detail, like the ET creatures in the senate, or the guy from Grim Fandango at the Pod Race.

■ **SOUND:** In a word, superlative. With a decent surround setup you'll swear you were sitting in the cinema. In fact, if you position your subwoofer correctly you'll feel a tangible gust of wind in certain key explosion scenes; the effect is mind-bending. Music, vocals and effects all come through fine, with no one element crowding out the rest. Optimised for THX, Dolby 5.1 and 2.0. No DTS, but who cares?

■ **COMMENTARY:** Apparently this is George Lucas' first ever commentary on any of his films. It's not just George at the mic, though. He's helped out by Rick McCallum, Ben Burtt, Rob Coleman, John Knoll, Dennis Muren and Scott Squires. Their specialised commentary reveals much that is not even touched on in the other documentary features.

■ **TRAILERS:** Three trailers are included on the features discs: The teaser trailer, the theatrical trailer, and the video clip for Duel of the Fates (See *Feature Focus*).

■ **TV SPOTS** Seven brief adverts, each no more than a minute in

length. Five of them are classified as "tone poems," each of which focuses on one aspect of the movie while a key actor reads out an ominous fragment of poetry.

The poems aim is to convince the viewer of the movie's depth and complexity backfires somewhat. They are: One Love, One Dream, One Destiny, One Will, and One Truth. There are also

DID YOU KNOW?

■ In the credits, Jabba the Hut is billed as playing himself. Well, who else?

Anakin's mum always made sure he had a packed lunch whenever he went off to save the universe



"EVERY SINGLE FRAME EXPLODES WITH DETAIL"

two more conventional TV ads, which are simply truncated versions of the theatrical trailer.

■ **DELETED SCENES:** Seven scenes cut from the theatrical release of the film have been completed and included on the features disc (See *Feature Focus*).

■ **DELETED SCENES DOCUMENTARY:** This takes the deleted scenes and intersperses them with interview fragments from Lucas and other high ranking members of his production team.

■ "THE BEGINNING" MAKING

EPISODE I: An hour long documentary culled from over 600 hours of behind the scenes footage taken during the course of the films production (See *Feature Focus*).

■ **FEATURETTES:** Five short documentaries outlining different sides to the production process (See *Feature Focus*).

■ **WEB DOCUMENTARIES:** This is a series of 12 short documentary sequences that were originally posted at the official *Star Wars* web site. They were incrementally released in the lead up to the original theatrical release of *The Phantom Menace*. Much of their material overlaps with that included in the other features on this disc, but they still provide an interesting insight into the way you build up a hype campaign.

■ **ANIMATICS:** Includes an explanation of the role of animatics in film production today, along with two multi-angle sequences (See *Feature Focus*).

■ **EXCLUSIVE PRODUCTION PHOTOS:** Dozens of never-before-seen behind-the-scenes photographs. Aside from your usual batch of the actors handling around looking goofy on the sets, there is some amazing high-speed photography of the stunts. Also included are shots of Nathan Hamill, son

of Mark Hamill, who appeared as an extra, and Warwick Davis, who most of us know as Willow.

■ **PRINT CAMPAIGN:** Stills of the ads that were pasted in varying sizes on the sides of buildings, busses, and so on. The campaign was intentionally highly iconic, each with a single character image with a couple of mysterious statements like "One Merchant. One Gambler." Every single variant is included.

■ **POSTERS:** Video stills of all the movie posters, perhaps the most striking is the one which simply has the young Anakin Skywalker walking down a Tatooine street, with a shadow hanging on the wall behind him. On a second glance one realises that it's not his shadow at all, but - Darth Vader's! Plus you get all the conventional posters consisting solely of character montages.



■ STAR WARS STARFIGHTER:

The Making of a Game is basically a brief infotainment piece on the video game spin-off for PlayStation 2. In very quick succession you get pans across design sketches, short interviews with the production team, and footage from the finished game. It's all presented in a infotainment-like fashion. It resembles an infomercial but we do get one or two insights into Episode II by virtue of what's going to be in the game.

JAMES COTTEE

IS IT WORTH IT?

If you're a *Star Wars* fan, you want this disc. The extras outshine the film by ten to one.



FEATURE FOCUS

TRAILERS Not one, not two, but three superb trailers

In modern times the art of making theatrical trailers has become quite sophisticated. It's not unusual for a film's trailers to deliver a completely different vibe to the film itself, and *The Phantom Menace* is an excellent example of this phenomena. Three trailers are included on the features disc: the original teaser

trailer, the theatrical trailer that followed it, and the video clip for "Duel of the Fates".

The teaser trailer made a big deal about showing off the CG effects in the movie, particularly the synthetic character Jar-Jar Binks. It also played a sequence from "The Imperial March",

Darth Vader's theme, even though the piece doesn't get used in the film at all. A much better trailer is the one that followed; it's telling that Jar-Jar is only in it for about three seconds, presumably the result of feedback from the film itself. "Duel of the Fates" is a tense piece of music combining choral and

instrumental elements, and plays towards the end of the film during the climactic light sabre battle. The video clip is notable for showing extensive behind the scenes footage from making the film, including spectacular time lapse footage of building the sets.

